

UGC-CARE List

Journal Details	
Journal Title (in English Language)	Shodh Sanchar Bulletin (print only) (Current Table of Content)
Journal Title (in Regional Language)	शोध संचार बुलेटिन
Publication Language	English , Hindi
Publisher	Shodh Sanchar Educational and Research Foundation
ISSN	2229-3620
E-ISSN	NA
Discipline	Multidisciplinary
Subject	Arts and Humanities (all) , Social Sciences (all)
Focus Subject	Arts and Humanities (miscellaneous) , Social Sciences (miscellaneous)



CONTRIBUTION OF MAHATMA PHULE AND SHAHU MAHARAJ TO THE UPLIFTMENT OF WOMEN

□ Dr. Kale Sanjay Ankush*

ABSTRACT

In the Indian man dominated society, women faced horrible problems since vedic period due to misguided rituals as well as superstitions. Women have been exploited through many ways like child marriage, Parda Pratha, sati pratha, restrictions to widow remarriage, widow's exploitation, Devdasi system, so taking birth as a women have been treated as a curse to woman. That system made woman monotonic and developed inferiority complex in her mind, which became the biggest obstacle in her personal, social and economic development. Bringing back women's self confidence, self respect and overall empowerment of women, many leaders like Mahatma Phule and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj sacrificed their lives for backward people and women. They mostly paid their attention on education to all irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex and poverty. Mahatma Phule opened first school for women with his wife Savitribai .he opposed child marriage and started a home for widow .Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj opened hostels for the students of different castes who wanted to take education in Kolhapur which is considered as "mother of hostels". many important laws enacted by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who fought for the rights of women and made provisions in constitution of India so that women must be treated equally in society whether it is education, employment, social and economic rights. Through this paper it is tried to verify the contribution of Mahatma Phule and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj for upliftment of women.

Keywords- Women education, empowerment, emancipation, social-economic status, implementation, legislative, prohibition and advancement

Introduction:-

Women empowerment is the process of keeping them safe against all forms of violence. It also includes the building up of a healthy society as well as political environment where she can live without the fear of exploitation, apprehension, operation and discrimination. women empowerment exist from the local, state and national levels in many sectors which involve education, health, gender based violence, economic opportunities and participation in politics. Empowerment of women is the process of upliftment of women

in social, political and economic status in the society. Sex ratio of the women in India is lower than men as compared to the women's world population which is 50%. If we see the social status of women which is not equal to men in all the places, whereas in the western society the women have got equal rights and status with men .Today in India, gender discrimination and disabilities are found as we see that, from ancient to mediaeval times many reformers fought for the women. In modern India women have held many prestigious offices which include president ,prime minister,

*Associate Professor, K.V.N. Naik Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha's, Arts, Commerce & Science College, Nashik

speaker of loksabha ,union ministers, chief minister, governor and finance minister nowadays as compared to ancient women are developing themselves.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule

Mahatma Phule was a pioneer of women's education in India, who was born on 11th April 1827 at Katgun in Satara district. He was a great thinker, anti-caste social reformer and Indian social activist as well as he worked for the emancipation of women, eradication of untouchability and the caste system. He faced degradation on the occasion of Brahmin friend's wedding which was the turning point of his life .In the marriage procession his participation was not like by his friend's parents, due to his lower caste background, he was scolded and also insulted. Remembering him not having the sense to keep away from the ceremony , which was prohibited for lower caste to attend. Mahatma Phule was deeply hurt by this kind of injustice of the caste system; extremely hurt by this incident he started working for the emancipation of the lower caste with an aim to protect them from exploitation, superstition, atrocities of the priestly classes and practitioners of the orthodox. He established Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873. He was deeply influenced by the Thomas Paine's book "Right of Man" and Theodore P arks "Letter to People of US" and developed a sense of Social Justice. Mahatma Phule was not a poor man though he faced such humiliation incident. This indicates that root cause of injustice and discrimination is not economic but social structure made by upper classes. Mahatma Phule and his wife Savitribai were excellent and remarkable personalities in that time. He wanted to educate people not only downtrodden classes but also women, so he trained his wife for the school teacher. In India, Savitribai was the first woman teacher. In 1848 he started the first school for girls in Pune. Bringing the value of equality at home he wants to educate women first, but Savitribai had faced bitter opposition from the orthodoxy people, the people, who were deeply influenced of the

orthodoxy thought, pelted stones and cow dung on them, some spat on them as well as abuse them. They faced social boycotts, but they continued on women empowerment and paved the way on empowerment of women only eight girls were took admission on the first day of the school with the time, the number of students increased. In 1851 to 1852 opened to more girls' school. He also started school for the lower classes such as Mahars and Mangas. By giving education to women and he brought them in public life.

For the development of the country equality and oneness should be in society as well as family. He opposed many child marriages in order to empower women. He started a home for widows as well as initiated for widow remarriage. In that time, in Brahmins and in the Hindu society child marriage was very common and widow remarriage were banned. Many widows were young and they could not live in the way in which they wanted to live due to the orthodox people. They were resorted to abortion or there illegitimate children left to their fate by leaving them on streets or anywhere. Mahatma Phule saw their unfortunate condition after their husband's death. 1863 he opened a home for newborn infants to prevent suicide and infanticides.

The introduction of the book '*Shetkaryacha asood*' Jyotirao says

“Without education wisdom was lost

Without morals were lost

Without morals development was lost

Without development wealth was lost

Without wealth the Shudras were ruined” lack of education so much has happened.

Mahatma Phule firstly paid attention on universal of education. Irrespective of Creed, colour, caste, poverty and sex, means education to all. Mahatma Phule had fought too much to reform society as well as to establish equality. His Motto was education for all, in the same way there is same motto of the today's

education system “to provide education for all.” Ideas of Mahatma Phule on education, Social justice and equality were very important for implementation. Mahatma Phule condemned of the system in which millions of people had suffered from centuries still now. He thought all people should get equal opportunities because everyone by birth is free as well as equal. They should have natural rights. In India he was one of the first person who rebel against the traditional social system. In his books ‘*Brahmanache Kasab*’ and ‘*Gulamgiri*’ he criticized the caste system.

Architect of constitution of India and the first minister of the law of Indian Republic Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was deeply inspired by the thoughts, life and work of Mahatma Phule who was bestowed the title ‘Mahatma,’ on 11 may 1888 by Vitthalrao Vandekar who was a social reformer in Maharashtra. Mahatma Phule also known as ‘Martin Luther of India.’ In short Mahatma Phule emancipated women and Shudras from the control a religious people or orthodox practitioners.

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj:-

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj the leader of the Bahujan and the king of Kolhapur work for the empowerment of women. He not only introduced the Laws but also established institution. He also made aware of many Evil practices which were happening in society. He also gave scholarships and fellowships. He did not just lead a royal life in the palace but he always paid attention what was happening around him in the society. He understood the problems of the citizens of the nation as well as state. Education was dominated by Brahmin Samaj since the Vedic period. Teaching and learning were considered Brahmins religion; the same thought felt by the non Brahman Samaj also. Maratha, Shudras and the women class also kept away from education. Social change began with the coming of British rule in India. Shahu Maharaj was deeply influenced by the Indian social reformers. He followed the footsteps of Mahatma Phule. Shahu Maharaj worked for the Satyashodhak movement. He

also associated with Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Satyashodhak Samaj and theosophical society in which he had been always attacked the domination of Brahmins and tried for the eradication of the caste system. By supporting these societies Shahu Maharaj realized that this movement would not change the condition of the Bahujan Samaj immediately. He thought that Bahujan Samaj needs special help who is weak and backward, but this idea was opposed by the upper class. He had built hostels for the students from different caste by which they will get better education.

Shahu Maharaj was also aware of the exploitation and backwardness of women in the Indian society. Women’s status in patriarchal society was subordinate and exploitative. Many issue like prohibition to women education, child marriage, prohibition to widow remarriage, want of boy child, rate of illiteracy, Parda system, miserable and unbearable life of women not only in society but also in her family. Wife beating, crimes like cruelty, violence, sati pratha, rape against women, many traditions and customs based on religion in hindu society which made her totally depend on male. Social reformers like Mahatma Phule and Agarker tried for her identity and empower her. Shahu Maharaj also did not bear the exploitation of women in both sides vertically and horizontally. He felt the need to enforce and binding laws will change the unbearable and torch able Customs and tradition in the society.

The most important laws were enacted:
-1) free and compulsory education to all.2) Marriage registration act and inter caste and inter religion marriage.3) Prohibition of harassment of women act.4) Divorce amongst different caste and religion - Kolhapur act.5) Hindu illegitimate children and act relating to jogtin.6) Devadasi prohibition act.

To change the situation of women exploitation at home as well as in the society, Shahu Maharaj made certain laws to protect women's natural right. There was a thought in the traditional society that only Brahmins and

their children had a right or authority to get education. Hereby other classes had ability to take education but they did not want to do so, even they did not think about educating girl child. The most important law was made by Shahu Maharaj under his kingship 'free and compulsory primary education to all', with a thought that children of downtrodden, backward and the farmer classes will be educated. Shahu Maharaj made it free and compulsory because only education will break the barriers of the upper classes.

The second act which is so important "inter caste and inter religious marriage" made under Shahu Maharaj's region. Many orthodox leaders strongly opposed this bill but leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose supported this bill strongly. This law also supported by the Satyashodhak Samaj and non Brahmin leaders in Maharashtra. So Shahu Maharaj decided to make a law for his province too on 12 July 1919 under these circumstances. The law which was related to widow remarriage was also made by Shahu Maharaj. Widowhood was considered to be terribly outcaste life as well as torturous for the young widows. They were always away from all auspicious occasions in the family and in the society, which means they all were away from happiness and natural desires. This type of situation gave them feeling that the death is better than this dangerous life, so they committed suicide or going for sati. Widow Remarriage act gave a new life to the widows who were young.

Most important act implemented by Shahu Maharaj, in case of divorce was Divorce Act and Dignity of Children Right. In this act take care of the security of women's right and to care for her maintenance after divorce. This act was applicable to all religion except not for the Parsi's and the Christians of Kolhapur state. In the case of women who had been treated cruelly before her maturity, the punishment was doubled. Cruelty includes keeping widow hungry for two days, husband's immoral relationship with another woman,

insulting or avoid her purposefully, threatening her, creating fear mentally as well as physically and ignoring her means cruelty towards her. The whole act included 11 articles and punishments, for harassment was fine rupees two hundred and imprisonment for six months. There was a tradition of dedicating girls in the name of god before and after independence mostly backward class practiced it. But Shahu Maharaj considers it as a blot on Hindu law. Jogin, Murali, Devdasi and Shavin came into existence through the traditions. Shahu Maharaj tried to prohibit such cruel tradition by passing a law.

Conclusion:-

It was not easy to get rid of deep rooted cultural values or reform tradition which sustains discrimination. Leaders like Mahatma Phule and Shahu Maharaj dedicated their entire life for the upliftment of downtrodden and untouchable. They also fought for getting equal rights of all men and women. They made efforts for making women self dependent today and tried to initiate many schemes not only in their region but also for whole country. Many laws implemented for the empowerment of women in the Indian society. Women became more knowledgeable by taking education. They became aware of what is right and wrong in the sphere of science and begin to ask questions about the old customs which humiliated them. Shahu Maharaj tried to free women from the old religious tradition and caste as far as back as 87 years ago. Women's are still exploited and harassed in a large extent. The age of 21 century, is also known as the age of information and technology. A girl child is still denied by aborting the female fetus, which is so thoughtless issue facing in India. Even women are facing many new problems when she is taking education and getting jobs.

Though there are many problems in front of them but the status of women has been changing with the time. Women are taking hard work for making her stable, free, equal. Even not only the society but also her family has been changing and giving respect to her, this

positive change occurred only by these leaders who sacrificed their lives for the upliftment of women.

References:-

- 1) Bhosale, S.S., 1981, Rajarshi Shahu Sandarbh Aani Bhumika, Ranjeet Prakashan, Kolhapur.
- 2) Keer Dhananjay, 2013, Mahatma Jotirao Phooley, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai.
- 3) Khanna L. M., 2014, Indian Social Justice A Case for Review Partridge Publishing India.
- 4) Mugali S. Y. and Amadihal P. S., 2008, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's views on upliftment of women as reflected in sarvajanik stayadharna *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 69
- 5) Powar Jaysingrao, 2001, (edited)'Rajarshi Shahu Smarak Granth' Kolhapur Ithihas Probhodhini, Kolhapur.
- 6) Rasam Vasnti, Sep 2015, Contribution of Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj To The Cause Of Women, Kolhapur. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299368768>
- 7) Srinivas, M. N., 1962, Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
- 8) Upadhyay H. C., 1997, Status of Women in India, Anmol Publications, New Delhi.

